

Washington, DC—In the wake of recent reports that U.S. foreign aid to the Palestinian Authority has increased by over \$68 million this year despite an embargo, Congressman Steve Israel (D-NY) questioned Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about the \$86 million the Administration has requested to train Palestinian security forces at hearing today of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations.

“There’s a lot of talk about benchmarks in Iraq; I believe that we need benchmarks in regard to the aid that’s going to Palestinian Authority security forces,” Israel said at the hearing. “We’re in a situation where we don’t know who’s playing for the good guys and who’s playing for the bad guys. If we’re going to provide these sorts of funds with taxpayer dollars, we need transparency and accountability to ensure that we’re not equipping militias. We should not give funds to forces that fail to reject violence and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian peace accords. I want to know where this money is going, how it’s being spent, who’s spending it and how success will be judged.”

Secretary Rice did not commit to benchmarks, but acknowledged the need for transparency. She also indicated that the State Department will request less funding for Palestinian security forces because of concerns over accountability.

Congressman Israel represents New York’s Second Congressional District. Prior to joining the House Appropriations Committee, he served for four years on the Armed Services Committee. He is founder and co-chair of the Democratic Study Group on National Security and is the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus Task Force on Defense and the Military.